

**VILLAGE OF NORTHFIELD  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
Minutes of February 26, 2013**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Chair Kevin T. Beal, Village Trustees Colin T. Bright, Dennis Donahue, Stephen Fitzhugh (absent), and K. David Maxwell. Also present were Village Manager Jay Marcotte, Acting Clerk Ken McCann, and Kathleen Lott (Merger Committee/*Northfield News*).

A Public Hearing for the purpose of providing written or oral views on the article to be voted upon by Australian Ballot at the Special Village Meeting on March 5, 2013, was warned to immediately precede the regular meeting. Chair Beal called the Public Hearing to order at 7:00 p.m. He then opened the floor to any member of the public who wished to discuss the article (listed below).

**Article 1. Shall the Village of Northfield vote to authorize the Merger of Northfield Town and Northfield Village in accord with the proposed Plan of Merger approved by the Village Trustees at their meeting of January 21, 2013 with said Plan of Merger to become the charter of the merged municipality as of the effective date of merger, which is midnight on June 30, 2014? (Australian Ballot).** As no member of the public wished to address this matter at this time, the Village Trustees spoke instead. Trustee Maxwell stated that he is opposed to the Merger Plan as written and he has written letters to the local newspapers to this effect. He is concerned that the Village utility ratepayers will become a voting minority in the consolidated municipality and that their concerns will not be properly addressed. Trustee Maxwell would like the utility commissions that would be established post-merger to be more independent of the new combined Select Board. Trustee Bright stated that state laws specify the amount of autonomy available to such utility commissions. Trustee Maxwell noted that some Vermont communities have elected boards whose only function is to govern public utilities. Chair Beal stated that it would be possible to address these concerns through charter changes if this should remain a post-merger problem.

Trustee Donahue stated that some residents have the assumption that such past Town/Village disputes as taxation of utility properties would disappear should merger come into effect; he did not agree with this. Chair Beal agreed, adding that the inter-company charges policy also would be maintained.

Trustee Bright feels that the new utility commissions would have sufficient autonomy and would provide annual reports to the consolidated Select Board. Also, two members of the three-member commissions would be elected by ratepayers so there would be a proper balance between their interests and that of the Town. He also felt that a consolidated Select Board would be better able to resolve such conflicts as sewer extension, other infrastructure improvements beyond the current Village boundary, etc. Trustee Bright favors the Merger Plan and encourages voter support.

Kathleen Lott, who is a member of the Merger Committee, stated that the document speaks for itself and does include a proper balance between Town and Village concerns. She favors municipal merger and feels that it is time for Northfield to have one governing board. Ms. Lott believes that the Merger Plan does provide protections for the ratepayers, including the fact that utility funds cannot be used for other purposes. She added that the Northfield community always has come together in the past when the need arose (i.e., Tropical Storm Irene) and this will continue in a merged municipality.

Chair Beal then thanked the Merger Committee for drafting the Merger Plan now under consideration. He added that communication between the Town and Village elected boards has improved over the past year and both responded in a timely manner when charged to develop a merger document that could be voted upon at Town Meeting Day 2013. While Chair Beal still believes that merger would not result in any immediate cost savings, he encouraged Village residents to review the Merger Plan printed in the Town Report in order to form their own opinions before casting their votes.

There being no other questions or comments, the Public Hearing adjourned at 7:15 p.m. The regular meeting began immediately.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

- III. PUBLIC COMMENT (Scheduled and Unscheduled).** There was none.

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. February 12, 2013 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Trustee Bright, seconded by Trustee Donahue, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

**V. APPROVAL OF BILLS**

- a. Warrant #17-13.** Motion by Trustee Bright, seconded by Trustee Donahue, to approve Warrant #17-13 in the amount of \$20,864.34. Trustee Maxwell noted a mileage compensation request on the warrant and asked if the utility car was out of service. Manager Marcotte stated that he had to use his own vehicle to attend an out-of-town meeting because the utility car was being used for meter reading. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

## **VI. OLD BUSINESS**

- a. **Village Common Rehabilitation Project.** Manager Marcotte has been provided with the contact information so that he can seek easements for the Merchants Bank property. In addition, Project Engineer Evan Detrick (DuBois & King) is working with the State on other items. Ms. Lott asked if it was accurate that project construction would begin soon after Labor Day this year (09/02/13). Manager Marcotte stated that this is the current timeline given delays in obtaining needed easements, etc. The construction phase should take about two (2) months so it should be completed by mid-November 2013 (if work begins on time). Chair Beal suggested that it might be productive to have Mr. Detrick address the Board and general public again regarding the new project timeline, etc.
- b. **Smart Grid Project.** Since Trustee Fitzhugh has been working on this project for the Board and is not present tonight, this item will be tabled for now.
- c. **Streetlight Replacement Project.** Manager Marcotte spoke recently with Josh Kelman, who is an Energy Consultant for Vermont Energy Investment Corporation (VEIC). Mr. Kelman informed him that LED lighting prices have dropped dramatically so Manager Marcotte will be developing new project cost estimates for the Board. Mr. Kelman also informed Manager Marcotte of different sources of funding for this project, also known as "Creative Financial Funding," that could save the Village a considerable amount of money. Manager Marcotte also has discussed this project with Town Manager Robert Lewis as it affects areas outside the Village.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS**

- a. **Special Northfield Village Meeting: Tuesday, March 5, 2013.** Chair Beal noted that voting on the sole Australian Ballot article (Town/Village Merger) will take place in the Northfield Middle/High School cafeteria from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. In addition, the Town/Village Merger question can be discussed at the Town Meeting's open session, which will begin at 10:00 a.m.

## **VIII. MANAGER'S REPORT**

- a. **Village Common Railroad Crossing.** Manager Marcotte has contacted CV Properties, which owns the land on which the damaged walkway at the railroad crossing is located. The Village currently pays CV Properties \$100 per year for use of this walkway and it was suggested that the Village should have a direct relationship with Central Vermont Railroad (CVRR) concerning this property. Manager Marcotte believes that progress on this matter is now being made and he hopes to have something new to report at the next meeting.

## **IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS**

- a. **Northfield Home Energy Challenge.** Chair Beal noted that the next meeting of the local group formed in response to the Vermont Home Energy Challenge (sponsored by Efficiency Vermont) will be held on Thursday, February 28, 2013, at 6:00 p.m. in the Community Room. Trustee Maxwell noted that Selectman Brad Denny is one of the meeting's organizers and he is very excited about the possibility of reducing the energy costs of the participating Northfield residents.
- b. **Sidewalk Sweeping.** Chair Beal noted that the Village Highway Department now plans to replace the current trackless with a Bobcat; he asked if the new machine would be narrow enough to clear the sidewalks of snow and ice. Manager Marcotte stated that the trackless' clearance is forty-eight inches (48") and there are Bobcats available with as little as thirty inches (30") of clearance. In addition, the Bobcat would be a much more versatile machine with attachments available for snow sweeping, snow blowing, etc.

## **X. PUBLIC COMMENT (Unscheduled).** There was none.

## **XI. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Trustee Maxwell, seconded by Trustee Donahue, to adjourn. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kenneth L. McCann*

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes are subject to approval at the next regular meeting.